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Congress Honors Life and Achievements of Pope John Paul II

WASHINGTON, D.C.- Congress passed today a resolution honoring the life and achievements of His Holiness Pope John Paul II and expressing profound sorrow on his death.

Congressman Todd Akin (R-MO), recognized the Pope's affect on the modern world and his appeal, inspiration and spiritual instruction to multitudes of people across denominational divides.

Congressman Akin made the following statement on the floor of the United States House of Representatives during a special order today:

"Mr. Speaker, I rise today in remembrance of Pope John Paul II.

"Pope John Paul II held a special place in the hearts of the more than one billion Catholics worldwide. For many younger people, he was the only Pope that they have ever known. However, his influence was by no means limited to the Catholic community. Rather, his moral courage and spiritual passion gave encouragement, clarity and strength to people around the globe.

"My hometown of St. Louis was honored with a visit by Pope John Paul in January of 1999. The arrival of the Pope to the birthplace of the first cathedral west of the Mississippi was truly an honor. Americans poured into St. Louis to participate in prayer services, a rally and the celebration of the Mass. Of particular note was the enthusiasm of the young people who came to a youth rally held in St. Louis on the evening of January 26, 1999. Reaching out to young people is truly a characteristic of Pope John Paul that will not be soon forgotten.

"His defense of the culture of life is best embodied in his own words given in October of 1979

right here in Washington, DC. Let me quote him for a moment:

'I do not hesitate to proclaim before you and before the world that all human life...is sacred, because human life is created in the image and likeness of God. Nothing surpasses the greatness or dignity of a human person... And so, we will stand up every time that human life is threatened. When the sacredness of life before birth is attacked, we will stand up and proclaim that no one ever has the authority to destroy unborn life.'

"In recent decades, I believe there have been no more stirring or inspiring words to encourage those of us who believe in protecting unborn life than those. The Pope's consistent fight for the sanctity of life never wavered.

"His defense of life extended from the moment of conception to natural death. His heart was always toward the weak and powerless, those whose voices were silenced cruelly or unjustly. That same defiant commitment to human dignity animated his resolute opposition to communism.

"In the 1980s, communism faced three implacable foes - Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and Pope John Paul II. The Pope's courageous and historic leadership emboldened the downtrodden people of Poland and all of Eastern Europe to look their Marxist overlords in the eye and say, "Enough." He deserves the thanks of all people for his critical role in consigning the former Soviet Union and its satellite dictatorships to the trash-bin of human memory.

"Pope John Paul will be fondly remembered as a person of great energy, courage and faith. A man who did not shrink from fascism when he entered into an underground seminary in Poland during Nazi occupation, nor from communism when he challenged the world to rid itself of that evil.

"In his final years, he faced personal suffering with great dignity. He died as he lived, with bravery and faith.

"Today we honor his memory- may we always honor his legacy."